

Interview with Griffin, the armchair historian

Master of Command: The seven Years War

Q:

So some Questions for the video, to tell the audience something about the people who did the magic!

1. How big is the team? How many people are working on it?
2. How long does it take to reach the actual point?
3. Is a release date planned? Will it be an early access to support the development of the game?
4. Will you publish it yourself?
5. What makes the biggest difference between your game and competitors?
6. Are there unique gameplay mechanics?
7. Which gameplay mechanic do you personally like most?
8. A lot of people like to know how many factions, units etc. will be in the game, lets call it facts

A:

(Technical questions)

1. There are 6 people working on the game including myself. You could say 10 if you include some of the contractors who do things like music/sound design/art odd-jobs.
2. We've been working on the game for about a year now. We're working very efficiently, development has been moving two times quicker than our previous game; we are ahead of schedule. This is primarily because we are not doing multiplayer and just focusing on a strong singleplayer experience. We also aren't trying to do a big nation-conquering game and have a really tight scope for what we want to achieve.

3. For the release date we are aiming for Q1 of 2025, we will not be doing Early Access as we intend on delivering our game in a polished and completed state.
4. We're considering going with a publisher for this game, but this hasn't been decided. For our last game we published it ourselves, so we're fully capable of self-publishing.

(Game questions)

5 & 6. (answered both in one). So first, there are few real-time historical battle games set in the 18th century. I think just that very fact alone does make our game stand out. That said, we're aware of other great series like Total War and Ultimate General who are making games in this space. I think one of the biggest things we're trying to do with this game is really make the player feel like a general. In the newest Total War / Ultimate General games on the market, they focus heavily on the nation management along with real-time battles, but we really wanted to focus exclusively on what it means to command an army. For our campaign layer, players need to consider if their army has enough food or ammunition, what types of weapons their men are armed with, and even individual pieces of equipment like knapsacks/boots. Our campaign also has random generation so there is no way to rely on a previous strategy to win; each region the player enters will have unique terrain. This is to make you really feel like a commander who needs to make decisions on whether it's wise to cut through a mountain pass or take the main road, or stop at a local village to pick up recruits, etc. Finally, the campaign runs in real-time in these procedurally generated regions. For our battle layer, we're doing a lot for players to build a sense of attachment to their men. Unlike similar games in the genre, players can customize elements of their regiment's uniforms and fully customize the flags that they carry into battle. These are all visible within our real-time battle system. We also give the players a lot of control over the way their men are fighting, players can even decide the firing method of their troops like choosing between the more powerful but slower volleyfire or the rapid but less powerful free fire. There are also meaningful formations accessible like column or open order which are often not seen in similar games.

7. My favorite thing is the replayability of the game. Many historical games just focus on recreating a specific historical event, but our game really tries to make you feel like the war you're fighting is unique to you. So while it is based on the Seven Years' War, every time you play you're going to be facing different armies in different regions while utilizing different strategies. We also have different unlockable army compositions for each nation, so there are multiple ways to play with each country. Each army gets unique bonuses/drawbacks unique to it, so for example there is a Prussian army that's really fun to play with called the "Old Corps." This army only starts with 2 regiments (the smallest starting army in the game) but it has a massive bonus toward heavy infantry so it allows you to really lean into a small quality-based force.
8. There will be 5 factions: Britain/Prussia/Austria/France/Russia. Each nation has a roster of around **30 fully units** all of whom have their own unique stats and uniforms. So that's 150 units you'll encounter in the game. A chunk of each nation's rosters are comprised of "elite units" who are historical regiments notable from the Seven Years' War. Some examples include the "Death's Heads Hussars" for Prussia, or the "Deutschmeister Fusiliers" for Austria, or "Shuvalov Howitzers" for Russia. Faction variety is **very important** to us so we worked very hard to make sure every nation "feels" different, and has their own unique bonuses/drawbacks as well as their own weapons and even events that are designed for them specifically.

I also mentioned before we have "armies" that you can choose from within each nation. Each nation is going to have 3 distinct army compositions to choose from, meaning there are 15 different playthroughs you can do. Every army has a permanent buff and debuff, and has different starting forces/resources. Considering the large variety of distinct playthroughs, it only makes the randomly generated campaign system even more replayable....

More Details:

In our game you get to really personalize your troops

You can recolor the uniform, choose the flag, choose their primary weapon, choose what bayonet they have, and even collect little items for them like knapsacks/boots/ramrods etc

And as for your army, you have manpower, food, cash, and ammunition you need to manage

So it's very focused on giving the player the experience of being a general and having to manage this one force that you're really paying attention to.

That said, I should also note we are not working with a team size or budget anywhere near the Total War games, so we simply aren't going to be able to make an experience **grander** than a Total War game

But what we did do is focus down on a smaller focus (army management) and just focus all of our development in that

Flags:

each nation gets their own patterns/emblems

You can also choose the dye color on the facings of the unit

which will appear in battle that way

So you are building a strong sense of attachment to your men

Recruitment:

You also **do not just disband** troops and buy more. Your men have upgrade trees similar to Mount & Blade so you can have your lowly recruits become the best guards in your army with enough experience

Your recruits can be upgraded into a better regiment, all the while retaining their unique flag/items etc that you gave to them

Which builds a strong sense of attachment and progression

You are not building 100+ units you don't care about, and throwing them into countless battles only to raise 100 more

You have a limited amount of troops, and you need to keep them alive

You will notice every nation has a unique unit tree that has a different way of upgrading your troops.

Battles:

Q: Will there be something like order delay?

A: We've heard a lot of requests from our community to have some sort of order delay

But we just found that in playing, the order delay just caused more frustration

Because it felt like there was just a lag between your orders

I think the gameplay has just been more fun when you get the direct control over your army

We aren't going for any sort of "simulator" experience, but that doesn't mean the game will be unrealistic

One last thing I wanted to mention

Is that people tend to think that random generation looks ugly or repetitive

We've made a pretty good system to randomly generate terrain, because it's all hand-drawn but just mixed together in unique ways



So that is randomly generated, but looks very natural

At this point the interview ended and I would like to thank Griffin once again for the very nice, friendly and informative interview! Thank you very much! :-)
We conducted the interview as a chat via DISCORD.

In any case, I am already very enthusiastic about **Master of Command: Seven Years' War**

STRATEGOS XENOPHON

